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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 000373

SIPDIS

PASS TO S AND MITCHELL PARTIES

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KWBG](#) [SA](#) [NO](#)  
SUBJECT: SAUDIS FOCUS ON PALESTINIAN UNITY

REF: RIYADH 355

Classified By: Political Counselor Lisa M. Carle,  
reasons 1.4(b),(d)

#### 11. KEY POINTS

-- (C) Saudi FM Prince Saud al-Faisal assured Amb. Fraker March 1 that Saudi Arabia did not intend to arrive at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference with a predetermined position on Gaza reconstruction funding mechanisms.

-- (C) However, the Prince also spoke at length and with some apparent frustration about why Israel, and not the GCC, holds the key to strengthening the PA.

-- (C) Abdullah al-Hamdan, Head of the MFA Palestine Department told Post February 28 the Saudis would like to see a Palestinian unity government formed through dialogue and elections that "represents the Palestinian people," and agreed a new Palestinian government should support the peace process.

-- (C) Al-Hamdan added that the Saudis see their role as supporting Egypt in bringing all Palestinian factions together but will leave it to the Palestinians to decide what kind of government they want.

-- (C) Al-Hamdan's remarks suggested the Saudis are more concerned with the simple goal of Palestinian unity than with protecting individuals or preserving the Palestinian Authority in its current form. Referring to PM Fayyad, al-Hamdan said "There's no reason to remove him, but..." (the implication being that retaining certain individuals wasn't a sine qua non, either.)

-- (C) The Saudis expect a unity government would become the Palestinian partner for reconstruction assistance, working with the GCC/IDB program to give funding to "whoever needs it."

-- (C) Separately, the Norwegian Embassy in Riyadh informed Post March 1 that Norwegian Foreign Minister Stoere had telephoned Saud al-Faisal from Gaza February 28 to complain that the GCC decision on Gaza reconstruction funding had the effect of undercutting the PA.

#### 12. COMMENT

-- (C) As a Department Head, Al-Hamdan is not a decision-maker, but he appears well informed and able to articulate Saudi views.

-- (C) The hands-off approach described by al-Hamdan suggests that the Saudi priority is Palestinian unity. Fresh from the failure of their last intervention (the Mecca Accords) they seem unwilling to try to directly influence the unity negotiations.

FRAKER